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FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION FROM UNDER SECRETARY KENNEDY

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AODE](#) [AMGT](#) [KMRS](#)

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT'S LETTER OF INSTRUCTION TO CHIEFS OF MISSION

1. The President's Letter of Instruction to Chiefs of Mission (COM) is revised at the beginning of each new administration and sent to all newly appointed Ambassadors. It is the primary mechanism for communicating the President's foreign policy priorities and COM authority to U.S. missions overseas. The National Security Council (NSC) informed the Department of State on May 26, 2009 that President Obama has approved the language provided in paragraph two below as his Letter of Instruction to Chiefs of Mission. This letter will also serve as instructions for Ambassadors already in the field. Please share the full text of the new letter with others in your mission, especially your country team.

2. (BEGIN TEXT)

Dear Mr./Madam Ambassador:

Thank you for your willingness to serve our country as my personal representative to [country/international organization].

Together we have a great task before us. We must renew America's security and standing in the world through a new era of American leadership. The United States will advance its interests through a core pragmatism rooted in America's enduring values. We must rebuild our traditional alliances and pursue new partnerships based on mutual interests and respect, so that together we can confront key common challenges of the 21st century, including weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, poverty, pandemic disease, dependence on fossil fuels and global climate change. America is strongest when we act alongside other nations and peoples. Our security also is enhanced through principled and sustained engagement with those who think differently. As my personal representative, you will be the front line of our efforts.

Our security and prosperity are inextricably linked with those of other countries and people around the world. To strengthen both our national and global economies, we must expand trade as well as financial and scientific cooperation, and we will advance mutual understanding through educational and cultural diplomacy. We must work in concert with others to prevent, resolve, and mitigate conflict, combat transnational threats, strengthen law enforcement cooperation, and promote democratic values and human rights.

I will need your support for our efforts to provide forward-thinking, sustained diplomacy in every part of the world. We will apply pressure where it may be needed, and look for opportunities to advance U.S. interests. As appropriate, you should reach out to other government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, international organizations, and our military to leverage your own initiatives. I also urge you to pursue diplomacy and public outreach with 21st century tools and technology. As Chief of the U.S. Mission, one of your most important jobs will be to take care of our diplomatic personnel

and to ensure that they have the tools they need to support your efforts. The Mission should be seen as a welcoming and supportive place for American citizens and American businesses abroad.

I have asked you to represent the United States in [country/international organization] because I am confident that you possess the skills, dedication, and experience necessary to meet the many challenges that we face in these extraordinary times.

This letter contains your detailed instructions as my personal representative and the U.S. Chief of Mission. These instructions have been shared with relevant departments and agencies, and I have directed that they give you their full cooperation. I expect you to carry out your mission to the best of your ability and in full conformance with the law and the highest ethical standards. I am counting on your advice and leadership as Chief of Mission to help protect America's interests and to promote America's values.

As Chief of Mission, you have full responsibility for the direction, coordination, and supervision of all U.S. Executive Branch employees in [country], regardless of their employment categories or location, except those under command of a U.S. area military commander or on the staff of an international organization. With these exceptions, you are in charge of all Executive Branch activities and operations in your Mission.

You will report to me through the Secretary of State. Under my direction, the Secretary of State is, to the fullest extent provided by the law, responsible for the overall coordination of all United States government activities and operations abroad. The only authorization channel for instruction to you is from the Secretary or me, unless the Secretary or I personally instruct you to use a different channel.

All Executive Branch agencies under your authority, and every element of your Mission, must keep you fully informed at all times of their current and planned activities. You have the right to see all communications to or from Mission elements, however transmitted, except those specifically exempted by law or Executive decision.

You have full responsibility for the direction, coordination, and supervision of all Department of Defense personnel on official duty in [country] except those under the command of a U.S. area military commander. You and the area military commander must keep each other currently and fully informed and cooperate on all matters of mutual interest. Any differences that cannot be resolved in the field will be reported to the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense.

I expect you to take direct and full responsibility for the security of your Mission and all the personnel for whom you are responsible, whether inside or outside the chancery gate. Unless an interagency agreement provides otherwise, the Secretary of State and you as Chief of Mission must provide for the security of all United States government personnel on official duty abroad other than those under the protection of a U.S. area military commander or on the staff of an international organization and their accompanying dependents. You and the U.S. area military commander should consult and coordinate responses to common threats.

I ask that you review programs, personnel, and funding levels regularly, and ensure that all agencies attached to your Mission do likewise. Rightsizing the United States government presence abroad is a continuing requirement. To better meet our foreign policy goals, I will be expanding the Foreign Service and strengthening

civilian capacity to work alongside the military. At the same time, we need to eliminate unnecessary duplication in our foreign operations. Functions that can be performed effectively and efficiently by personnel based in the United States or at regional offices overseas should not be performed at post. We should make greater use of the expertise of host country citizens, and outsource functions when it is effective and efficient to do so. In your reviews, should you find staffing to be either excessive or inadequate to the performance of priority Mission goals and objectives, I urge you to initiate staffing changes in accordance with established procedures.

Every Executive Branch agency under your authority must obtain your approval before changing the size, composition, or mandate of its staff. If a Department head disagrees with you on staffing matters, that individual may appeal your decision to the Secretary of State. In the event the Secretary is unable to resolve the dispute, the Secretary and the respective Department head will present their differing views to me for decision.

All United States government personnel other than those under the command of a U.S. area military commander or on the staff of an international organization must obtain country clearance before entering [country] on official business. You may refuse country clearance or may place conditions or restrictions on visiting personnel as you determine necessary.

I expect you to discharge your responsibilities with professional excellence and in full conformance with the law and the highest standards of ethical conduct. You should ensure that there is equal opportunity at your Mission and no discrimination or harassment of any kind. Remember as you conduct your duties that you are representing not only me, but also the American people and America's values.

Sincerely,

Barack H. Obama

(END TEXT)

13. A modified version containing the same basic text will go to chiefs of multilateral missions (certain international organizations and Geneva). All versions of the letter will be posted on the Bureau of Administration/Global Information Services/Office of Directives Management intranet page at [http://arpsdir.a.state.gov/miscdoc/presidentsletter .html](http://arpsdir.a.state.gov/miscdoc/presidentsletter.html). If you have any questions please contact M/PRI Lynn Bullivant (202) 647-6496 or [bullivantnl@state.gov](mailto:bullivantnl@state.gov).

14. Minimize considered.

CLINTON